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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2008

#### In Today's Papers

Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of Ataturk's Death  
Media outlets give prominent front-page feature coverage to mark the 70th anniversary of the death of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the country's founding leader. Papers cover commentaries and interviews in memoriam under headlines such as Sabah's "70 Years Later, Ataturk is still Dearly Missed," far right Ortadogu's "He Lives in the Hearts of 70 Million People," mainstream Hurriyet's "You Are Always in Our Hearts," mainstream Aksam's "You Are Living in Our Hearts," Islamist-oriented Zaman's "Commemorating Ataturk with Respect," and leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet's "He Cannot Be Forgotten." Anatolian News Agency reports, "Today, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was commemorated throughout Turkey, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and Turkish missions in foreign countries on the 70th anniversary of his demise. Daily life and traffic stopped for two minutes of silence that began at 9:05 a.m., the time at which Ataturk passed away 70 years ago. Flags across the country were flown at half-staff. President Abdullah Gul led a delegation of top state officials to a ceremony at Ataturk's mausoleum, where President Gul signed the mausoleum's register by saying, "We are honored to be in your presence in our powerful country which is a source of confidence and balance in its region. Turkey has gained the respect of the whole world with its position, power, dynamism, and international influence regarding global peace and stability."

#### Editorial Commentary on Ataturk's Legacy

Mehmet Yilmaz wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "Ataturk and his founding principles of the Turkish Republic remain a shining historical example. All one has to do in order to reach this logical conclusion is to spend a couple of weeks in a Muslim Arab country or a North African country. If Ataturk had never transformed Turkey, today's Turkey would no different from today's Morocco, Egypt or Saudi Arabia. For this reason alone, Ataturk deserves our full respect."

Semih Idiz wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "Some people are hiding behind Ataturk's name as they deepen their anti-Western sentiments. I would suggest these people check the list of books, which is

maintained by the National Library, that Ataturk used to read. That list is the source of Ataturk's inspiration to re-shape Turkey's political and social model. Unfortunately, some circles today do not want to admit that Ataturk adopted the technical and institutional infrastructure of democracy, secularism and women's rights, not from the East but from the West. Turkey's development relies today also on that infrastructure inspired by the West. And that infrastructure directs Turkey's EU path. It is important to realize reforms that are vital for Turkey, which is more important than Turkey's EU membership."

Gungor Mengi wrote in mainstream Vatan: "Ataturk filled his short life with miracles like military victories and unbelievable civilian reforms. The reason for the attacks against him today lies in the fact that Ataturk was the only obstacle to shaping Turkey accordingly to some people's personal will. Ataturk is not only a flag or an idol, but the gate to modernity. Ataturk is our national trust. Any hostility directed against him is bound to be defeated."

#### Alevi Demonstrations Criticize the AKP Government and Outline Their Demands

Media outlets report around 100,000 Alevis rallied yesterday in Ankara, urging for the abolishment of the Sunni-dominated religious affairs directorate Diyanet. Demonstrators also called on the government to end the construction of mosques in Alevi villages, to recognize traditional Alevi Cemevis as places of worship and to end compulsory religious education. Ali Balkiz, the head of Alevi-Bektasi Federation, said the protests would continue. Papers

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report opposition CHP, DSP and pro-Kurdish DTP lawmakers participated in the rally in a show of support. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak condemned the rally "for providing an opportunity for the DTP to propagate Kurdish demands." Papers say the ruling AKP government rejected the Alevi's "extreme" demands, with State Minister Said Yazicioglu stating his government would "pay no attention" to the demands voiced in the gathering.

#### PM Erdogan in Erzurum

Sabah, Milliyet, Turkiye, Vatan, Hurriyet, Radikal, Zaman, Cumhuriyet: PM Erdogan addressed residents of eastern province of Erzurum yesterday and said "We were always against ethnic and regional nationalism. We remained at the same distant to all beliefs and never discriminated against other religions or sects," reports mainstream Hurriyet. Mainstream Vatan reports that after the protests he faced in the Southeast, PM Erdogan's morale was boosted in Erzurum yesterday with the warm welcome he received from the residents of Erzurum. Posters carried by the crowd pleased the PM, including one that read, "Our windows, doors and souls are open to you." Conservative-nationalist Turkiye quotes Erdogan from his speech in Erzurum when he said, "Turkey does not have time to waste with arguments or clashes. We have a single flag and single state."

#### The AKP's Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat Resigns

Media outlets reported over the weekend and today that top AKP official Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat resigned from his post as deputy chairman. Firat's resignation comes amid rumors that he was sacked by Prime Minister Erdogan over disagreements regarding the Kurdish issue. Firat allegedly criticized Erdogan during the most recent party board meeting for his hard-lined statements during a recent trip to southeast, in which the PM said those who were not happy with Turkey should feel free to leave the country. Firat was also allegedly uncomfortable with another statement Erdogan made in support of a man who has fired his shotgun on DTP demonstrators in Istanbul. Erdogan announced Firat quit due to health problems. Firat was replaced by former Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu, an influential Kurdish leader from Diyarbakir. Mainstream papers speculated over the weekend that Firat, feeling cornered in the face of corruption charges directed earlier by CHP's Kemal Kilicdaroglu, used Erdogan's statements on the Kurds as a pretext to leave his party.

Editorial Commentary on U.S. President-elect Barack Obama

Ceyda Karan writes in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Turkey will face foreign policy challenges during the Obama administration. Turkey can be prepared for this by producing policies based on regional realities. Relations with Armenia and Iraq are only some of these challenges. It will be to Turkey's benefit as long as America, under Obama's leadership, promotes a dynamic Turkish foreign policy."

Huseyin Bas opines in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "Obama's options are limited, because no matter what he does, he will have to gather his staff from among those who are responsible in the negative situation we are going through today. The real danger is that under this establishment, this talented and honest man might turn into one of those he wants to change --- just like Tony Blair, who came to power with great expectations but concluded his term as an ordinary politician, turning into just the opposite of what he wanted to be."

Ali Bulac writes in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "Before Obama had time to announce his victory, Israel killed six innocent civilians in Gaza in a senseless air strike on the region. Could it be a message from the Israeli hawks that Obama's presidency won't change Israeli policy towards Palestine? Political and strategic calculation in Afghanistan is one question, but the continuation of massacres against innocent and defenseless people formulates another problem."

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The world, first of all, wants Obama to decisively stop these massacres."

TV News:  
CNN Turk

#### Domestic News

- Opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal said "The AKP is collapsing," and challenged Prime Minister Erdogan to confront him in a televised debate.
- Three PKK suspects were arrested in Izmir while preparing to stage a bomb attack.
- Turkey's state-owned weapons company MKEK will produce sniper rifles with a 1000-meter range.

#### International News

- The Polish President's office backtracked on a previous claim that President Obama promised to continue the Bush administration's missile defense program.
- A Taliban suicide car bomb attack on a NATO military convoy in Afghanistan killed two Spanish soldiers.
- Inspired by Barack Obama, the French first lady and other leading figures publish a manifesto urging an end to racist discrimination in French politics and society.

WILSON